

# CONVENTION REPORT

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## A TRUE HISTORY OF SDS CONVENTION WHAT THE GUARDIAN COULDN'T AFFORD TO PRINT

BY: Steve Komm, Balto. SDS Labor Committee  
and Alan Smitow, Cornell SDS

In the days and weeks to come we expect to see a number of highly imaginative accounts of the events of the Chicago SDS convention. These flights of fancy will be necessary because neither side of the split which took place there -- especially the various National Office (NO) or Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) factions -- can afford to admit what actually happened.

In the first fantasy to appear, Jack A. Smith's Guardian article entitled "SDS Ousts PLP," we can see the common elements of RYM accounts to come. First, Smith pretends that there is only one SDS, that of the RYM faction, and that it "expelled" PLP. Secondly, he concludes from the incompetent handling of the RYM faction's split that it was "unplanned." These two items constitute the "line" the RYM factions were able to put together and get everyone to agree on and believe in by the end of the convention -- anything more was made impossible by their blundering, infighting and change of line from day to day. To cover up what really happened Smith simply omits or drastically edits the two most important sequences of the convention: the two walkouts of the RYM.

Third, he suppresses the political "principles" of the currently-in-command Dohrn-JJ-Rudd-Mellon faction of the RYM, united around the proposal "You don't have to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows," written by John Jacobs (jj). Any discussion of this amazing document would have made it clear that RYM did not split over the issue of "self-determination" or any other such "principle."

Let us quickly dispose of two parts of the distortion. No matter who writes what about the convention, in the fall there will be at least two groups claiming to be the "real" SDS, neither of which will have the allegiance of many present SDS chapters, and each of which will send representatives to all "independent" chapters to "win over" those chapters, i.e. make them spend all their time on the faction fight until all but the hardest factioneers are driven away or into another organization. There is only one word for this: a split. (Smith himself uses it later in his article.) Soon all that remains of SDS may be two or more isolated and embattled splinters and a mailing list.

The political potential and content of the principles of the Weatherman group (a thorough analysis is included in the article by T. Papert) was virtually summed up by Mark Rudd's regrettably

### NEWSFLASH

Last Monday July 7th, New York Regional SDS attempted to recreate the factional struggle which took place at the Chicago convention. The ousted Regional Office (RYM) group in N.Y. called a meeting which all factions decided to attend. RYM security permitted only people with special ID cards to enter. Those without these ID's had to swear an oath of loyalty to community control of the police, community control generally, and to Ho Chi Minh in order to attend this "SDS" meeting.

The Worker-Student Alliance caucus, arriving as a unit, was barred by RYM security guards who locked the glass doors leading into the New York University auditorium. When WSA attempted to break in, fighting erupted with RYM guards who used fire hoses to hold off the WSA group. Several of the combatants were hospitalized from broken glass wounds. A group of ten to fifteen police arrived on

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accurate self-characterization after his election as national secretary, when he observed that "the movement needs symbols, my name is a symbol. I think that's a good thing." The inevitable result of such spiritual leadership is, of course, that all who do not adhere to it are heretics or pharisees to be thrown out of the Temple. Such symbolic purgation is as effective as Christ's chasing away the moneychangers.

To get a sense of the real political content of this religious split, we will have to look at the frenetic maneuvering which led to the two walkouts. The second and final walkout, in particular, demands a rather melodramatic treatment.

### EXPOSITION

The RYM collective had originally planned to ('democratically') expel the PLP, but when PL and its allies appeared to be in the majority, RYM panicked and began looking for 1) an excuse to split, and 2) a maneuver for doing it.

First, maneuver: on Thursday, we had heard that the RYM was thinking of walking out and holding 'the real SDS convention' elsewhere. That night they were so desperate that they came up with a histrionic ploy scheduled to take place before the credentials fight so that there would not be a vote on whatever resolutions they presented. Individuals later admitted that this ploy (which they refused to describe) had been postponed.

Now, the excuse: there is reason to believe that few, perhaps only the leaders, expected the Panthers to intervene, but of such unexpected stuff history is made. For several days the RYM had searched for a pretext to split -- e.g., for a confrontation over PL's 'male chauvinism,' RYM attempted to pull together a women's caucus that would demand PL's expulsion because it didn't have enough women delegates. Several times the RYM fought unsuccessfully to have impromptu debates on male supremacy (once when a woman wanted to avoid a debate with PL on imperialism, after he had seen how badly PL schlonged Klonsky on racism). When male chauvinism didn't work out because the women did not care to be used in that way, the RYM tried to baiting PL on Vietnam during a fight over the agenda setup.

By Friday afternoon, the time of the agenda fight, they already knew that they would walk out. In preparation, thousands of leaflets were being printed, saying "We think so-and-so -- PL doesn't -- signed SDS." These leaflets were handed out as the Panthers delivered their ultimatum.

The ultimatum itself was the culmination of three days of factional absurdities including a scene where PL and the Worker-Student Alliance caucus screamed "No deals in Vietnam! U.S. out now!" and the RYM chanted "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is gonna win," while, not to be outdone, the SDS Labor Committees yelled "Let's go Mets!" (incredibly still in second place).

### FIRST WALKOUT

The climax of the early part of this theatre of the absurd, the Panther ultimatum, was a disaster. The same speaker who had the day before delivered part of the by now classic "pussy power" rap ("women have a strategic position for the revolution -- prone") made a vicious and content-free attack on PL. Most of the crowd didn't dig it. Mike Klonsky intervened to try to calm the angry mob, but he had been typed by his most famous role, which was quite definitely not that of the peacemaker. Calling for a rebuttal WSA and others shouted him down. Jeff Gordon, who seemed to operate throughout the convention as if he were the floor manager of one of the presidential nominees in August, delivered the rebuttal, stating that PL did support struggles for self-determination and denouncing the RYM's use of the Panthers to avoid debate. Mark Rudd, seeing that Klonsky's act had not been convincing, "reasonably" called for a recess in order to permit the frantically caucusing NO collective to figure out the thematic gimmick for its next improvisation.

Suddenly Bernadine Dohrn seized the reins and took a vanguard action which was later to be described by Jeff Jones, her successor as interorganizational secretary, as "perhaps the most important thing in left history in thirty, maybe two hundred years" (a statement that speaks for itself). Dohrn announced that all those who were dissatisfied with PL should follow her into the adjoining room to

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### THIS REPORT

This Convention Report is published by the National Caucus of SDS Labor Committees because the real story of the convention has yet to appear elsewhere. We feel an understanding of the split in SDS is necessary to build the organization that must supersede it.

## WHY SDS HAD TO SPLIT WHAT NEXT???

BY: Tony Papert, NY SDS  
Labor Committee

At the same time that SDS was convening in Chicago for the last time, international central bankers met in Copenhagen in a similar ritualistic display of helplessness in the face of uncontrollable events. They were unable to come to agreement on a single concrete step to head off the danger of a world monetary collapse. The only result of their conference was the gloomy prognosis that if the credit crunch of this summer does not produce an immediate depression, the best that can be hoped for is a worldwide recession beginning in 1970.

The current economic crisis expresses itself in periodic currency crises, as speculative flows of 'hot money' flood one money market, then another, in search of the highest temporary rate of return. The most recent episode was the flood into Germany in early May. While a revaluation of the Deutschmark and a devaluation of the Franc were put off for the time being, the pressure on the monetary system continues to build. Capitalist schemes like the Special Drawing Rights paper gold operation can only spread the risk, postponing but not eliminating the threat of a future crash.

Underlying these surface manifestations is the vast credit expansion of the post-war period. Now, particularly since 1965, credit has grown at a much faster rate than has real production. Capitalist debts, therefore, have grown much faster than the means for paying them off. Or, to put it another way, while the market value of claims on production -- stocks, bonds, mortgages, commercial paper, etc. -- is increasing at a soaring rate, actual production is now increasing at a decreasing rate. A growing mass of capitalist property titles is competing for a relatively shrinking amount of real social wealth.

This means that increasingly, newly-accumulated capital is not re-invested in the expansion of real production, but joins the billions of dollars worth of already-idle capital dashing from one subsector of the world economy to another, from Brussels to London to Bonn to New York to Paris, seeking momentary advantage. Those national currencies which are the most overvalued (the Pound, the dollar, the Franc) are likely to be successively dumped in favor of those currencies containing relatively less fictitious value, such as the Deutschmark.

Since May, this hot money has been resting up in Germany and

in the United States. While some of the hot money residing in New York this Spring departed for Bonn (contributing to the stock market decline), rising interest rates in the U.S., fueled by the Federal Reserve's restrictive credit policies, have attracted capital to New York, including over \$13 billion in Eurodollars.

The current historically unprecedented level of interest rates now means that U.S. bankers may be damned if they do and damned if they don't. If interest rates continue to rise, the likelihood of defaults on debts increases; this could trigger a wave of further defaults on an international scale, or a series of bankruptcies. If interest rates (that is, yields) fall, hot money will leave the U.S. for greener pastures, causing a dumping of dollars and a possible new gold crisis.

No matter whether the bankers get past this hurdle or not, the fires of monetary collapse are still being stoked. Any of the upcoming waves in the monetary storm could set off a collapse and a world depression. For the danger in such a crisis -- of overproduction of speculative values and underproduction of real values -- is that the capitalists will simply cease trusting in each other's solvency.

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# Proposal-A New Newspaper Draft Editorial Statement

We believe that the break-up of SDS has created the immediate need for a new newspaper, explicitly socialist and revolutionary in its policy but completely open to non-socialists and radicals of all persuasions as readers and contributors. We believe that such a publication is essential to permit the free and open dialogue among socialists and with non-socialists which is a necessary precondition for the construction of a movement that will fill the functions for the next period that SDS filled for the last: to provide a national identity for radicals, an environment where they are able to broaden their local experiences into comprehensive revolutionary perspectives.

During the years of relative calm among American workers, SDS was able to do this. But we are now in a period when every section of the population is waking up, voicing its growing discontent, and being propelled onto the political stage. Clearly no student organization can suffice as a national focus for radicalization in such a period. The revolutionary movement which succeeds SDS must include unionized workers, black people and others along with students; organized workers and ghetto-dwellers must see people like themselves in the movement working with people unlike themselves in pursuit of a common end.

But anti-imperialism, anti-racism, anti-male chauvinism and all such oppositional, purely negative ideologies -- even anti-capitalism -- are now inadequate as bases of unity for a democratic movement of broadly representative composition. They do not speak to the needs of large elements of the population which must participate. Anti-racism, for example, insofar as it was given any meaning in SDS beyond a set of slogans, came to stand for action in behalf of certain ameliorative reforms which were in the interests of some sectors of the non-ruling class population, indifferent to others and against the rest -- as the Revolutionary Youth Movement (National Office, RYM) faction's "white skin privilege" concept and Progressive Labor's (PLP) "preferential hiring" demands are against the interests of white workers.

Anti-racism, then, is not the "common end" that can bind together the members of a broadly representative revolutionary movement. What is this common end?

If we want such a movement to be held together by anything more than blind obedience to abstract revolutionary slogans or some other form of purely artificial discipline, then the only basis for unity is a positive alternative to existing conditions, a conception of the reconstruction of society in the interests of all wage-earners and unemployed people: socialism. But it must be practical socialism -- socialist organizing. Thus the first question before the post-SDS movement, and before this newspaper is: how can we as organizers help weld together the discrete social groups and fragmented expressions of discontent with which we are working into a self-conscious unit prepared to run society without capitalists or bureaucrats? Or, put differently, what concretely is socialist organizing in this period?

We believe that a new newspaper is needed to begin this discussion because no channels presently exist for it. Of the two fragments of the old SDS, the RYM group has never allowed meaningful debate in its trade publications, the Guardian and New Left Notes. Now it has gone further and imposed agreement with a detailed declaration of principles as a condition for membership. RYM demands commitment in advance to non-criticism of various movements and governments, when precisely what is needed is criticism of every current social and political tendency, as well as a rethinking of the conclusions of socialists of the past.

It seems unlikely that the PLP-dominated SDS will provide a forum for engaging in the kind of debate which is needed to reconstitute a national focus for radicals. PLP, with its left-center coalition conception of SDS, is convinced that that organization is not the place for the development of revolutionary socialist ideas, that it should be an anti-imperialist and anti-racist but not a socialist movement, as Party members said several times during the Convention. With PLP and its allied Worker Student Alliance dominating the Convention, there was no scheduled discussion of perspectives for socialist organizing -- or any organizing, for that matter, not centered strictly around the campus -- either before or after the exodus of Dohrn, Klonsky et al. If a PLP-dominated New Left Notes continues this policy, as seems likely, then a new newspaper will be needed.

We would like to collaborate with all interested groups and individuals (including PLP, WSA and RYM) to set one up, representing no single tendency but the whole movement, or as much of it as thinks discussion of the practical implications of socialism is necessary at this time. Please write or telephone and tell us how you might help: what you might contribute in the way of editors, reporters, stringers, distribution and printing facilities or money. If the response to this appeal is not sufficient to form the basis for a newspaper, then we will begin, together with all those indicating interest, with a mimeographed discussion bulletin.

## WHY SDS HAD TO SPLIT

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### AUSTERITY

At this point, the bankers have only one way of staying off a collapse and its attendant social dangers: to support their respective currencies by increasing the profitability of investment in that currency (that is, investment in their particular subsector). This can only be accomplished in the short run by subsidizing its profitability out of wages.

This requires depressing wage levels and wage-equivalent consumption. But it doesn't need to take the form of actual wage

cuts at the point of production. It is more smoothly accomplished through taxation, inflation, and cutting back public services. The continuing squeezing of British workers (under the auspices of a 'labour' government) provides the model for things to come in this country. European austerity programs are already being imitated by budget cuts in many major American cities and states, most notably in New York.

(The capitalist avariciousness which the Progressive Labor Party (PL) uses to "explain" every feature of bourgeois society from the oppression of blacks to the role of women, explains so much that it clarifies very little. The explanation

in PL's newspaper Challenge that Rockefeller is cutting public services because "capitalists don't care about the workers" fails to account for the existence of any public services to cut.)

At the close of the Copenhagen bankers' conference, Federal Reserve chief William McChesney Martin once again described the U.S. economy as a "house of cards." He advocated various methods of squeezing U.S. wage-earners to head off a collapse, such as increasing the 10% tax surcharge. Martin also hinted at a "Soviet-style forced savings" scheme. No doubt knowing from experience that the American Left would ignore his prognosis, he warned frankly that we can expect "a good deal of pain and suffering" ahead.

### DEFENSE

Since 1958 virtually every layer of the population of the advanced capitalist countries has begun a militant fight in defense of its customary prerogatives, its material-cultural aspirations. In the U.S., the civil rights movement, now the black liberation movement, arose first, in 1958-60. The radical student movement came on the scene shortly thereafter. Industrial workers, whose real wages have been falling since late 1965, have responded with a growing strike wave: the number of workers involved in strikes has tripled since 1963, and strikes are now larger on the average than at any time since the strike wave of 1946-48.

Under capitalism, this defense does not ordinarily take the form of a united movement. Just the opposite: as a rule the population crystallizes into thousands of isolated groups: trade unions, neighborhood groups, ethnic associations, etc., each far readier to fight another, or all the rest, than against the capitalist class. Craft unions battle with blacks and other "outsiders" over a declining job market; blacks blame their unemployment on whites who have jobs. Community, welfare and education groups, public employee unions and taxpayers compete bitterly with themselves and each other for shares of shrinking city and state budgets. These fragmented, rearward efforts have not been successful even as a defense: in general, all conditions of life continue to deteriorate for everyone.

The current growth of active racism, black cultural nationalism and other divisive ideologies among working people and their potential allies testifies to the self-contradictory nature of their natural and spontaneous defensive fight. The new Welsh nationalism which narrowly missed blowing up Prince Charles before his investiture is paralleled in Scotland, Brittany, Quebec, Czechoslovakia and many other industrial areas. Just as the pogroms grew apace with the pre-revolutionary crisis in Russia, the elections of Yorty in Los Angeles, Stenvig in Minneapolis, Marchi and Procaccio in New York City, and the last November Wallace vote augur worse to come -- unless socialists can find a way to lead prejudiced white and black workers and unemployed into alliances for common goals. Unless they can begin to unite their constituents, they will not even be able to hold themselves together; they will be divided themselves by the growing divisions in the rest of the population.

While the crisis excites every other popular layer into turbulent activity, the white-collar, professional and small-business stratum is in a special situation. Ghetto-dwellers, industrial workers, even farmers and

agricultural workers have woken up and begun to "bawl lustily" and fight in their own names in defense of their interests, but this is far more difficult for the unfortunates C. Wright Mills described so well. The army of clerks is atomized like no other army, and notoriously tied down into a bureaucratic life style which allows no collective or individual expression of dissidence. It peddles its personalities as much as its labor-power in order to live, and rebellious personalities are usually unsalable. Its mutinous striving, the desperation of ever-more-useless and ever-more-insignificant cogs in ever-expanding bureaucracies, can only find a voice through its children.

Thus when these children met in Chicago, pure release of rage was always in order, always on the agenda. It was one thing on which all factions agreed. Political discussion took a back seat, or rode in the trunk; in the main the Convention was an unpolitical but very militant rally, or an organized riot. Literally hours were devoted to choruses of chanting, shouting and screaming, dramatized by organized finger-pointing and fist-shaking, and sometimes accompanied by rhythmic banging of furniture. The solo parts, although more political, were often constructed with choral responses in mind: speakers would more or less artfully build up to a *tutti*, summon it, and then wait for it to begin and end. The WSA faction always had three or four cheerleaders, or conductors, stationed in front of the crowd.

The dimensions of the hall prevented any real dancing until Saturday night (only a few choreographed menacing stand-offs by picked men of the two factions recognizable by their distinctive insignia), which probably increased the emotional effect of the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) ballet (described elsewhere). Then a long, hypnotic incantation punctuated by rhythmic yelling in a partly-artificial atmosphere of the utmost frenzy brought inner light to about ten women and five men of the WSA faction, who began to speak in "tongues." One young girl remained standing long after her group had been signalled to sit down, shouting glassy-eyed at the top of her lungs a speech of which no one understood a word.

From Quakerism to Holy-Roller ecstasy -- was there ever a movement as spontaneous as SDS?

### SPLIT

The split was inevitable. Once students were no longer the only radicals, it was inevitable that their spontaneous movement would be pulled apart by the contradictory militancy of the population they were trying to reach. Just as Tom Hayden wanted it, before he became a Maoist: the organizer became the organized, and vice-versa. When SDS thought it was organizing others, it was mostly preparing its own dissolution.

What is the split about? One faction, the Worker-Student Alliance Caucus (WSA), thinks it is relying on the power of the workers; the other, RYM, thinks it is relying on the "third world." But the line really lies between trade-unionist and white-collar bureaucrat, the latter represented, incredibly, by a "heroic guerrilla." In reality, the WSA is relying on trade-union and similar parochialist struggles, which for all their present fury, reflect in this period workers' relative powerlessness. The RYM is relying only on itself.

In The Analysis of Dreams

Freud described how a neurotic with a compulsion towards being controlled or used by another person will meticulously (though unconsciously) plan and direct the situation in which he is to feel controlled or used, thus controlling in every detail the person he fantasizes controlling him. At the Convention the Panthers, usually a fiercely independent group, were put in the position of acting as mouthpieces, and even as ushers and bodyguards, for their "unqualified supporters" in the RYM.

The RYM faction was not called into being by the struggles of oppressed minorities and oppressed nations; on the contrary, it was the needs of students that created the myths about oppressed nations on whose basis the RYM largely operates. (Nothing could be further from the reality of oppression than these myths. The average Latin American has a caloric intake of 1200 calories a day. The real black oppressed is ceaselessly reaching for the good job that isn't there, the good housing that isn't there, the health care, etc., while the mythologists of RYM dismiss these strivings as (the equivalent of) mere fleshly temptations.

"Full employment," "decent housing," says the Panther program. "Fighting for these things would only make you less revolutionary," says the "Weatherman" proposal, the position paper of the majority faction of RYM.) To RYM, the oppressed national is god. Like every god, he is the product of his worshippers, an unconscious expression of their needs. A dream-creation of the spontaneous student movement.

One piece of evidence is that almost-identical student formations have arisen in countries without significant oppressed minorities. Any reader of *Obsolete Communism* -- The Left-Wing Alternative knows that the only real difference between Rudd and Cohn-Bendit, who even disputes the "third-world" strategy for a French revolution, is that the latter develops his ideas with far greater clarity, consistency, and force of logic.

According to the Weatherman proposal, the oppressed nations are demanding that everyone support them -- how? -- by adopting the ever-changing program of spontaneous student radicalism. The positive part of this program is so subordinate it is barely noticed: at the moment "Weatherman" is clamoring for everyone to adopt student-radical poverty and student-radical religion: "Your television set, your car, and wardrobe already belong, to a large degree, to the people of the rest of the world." "Socialism is white workers giving up their TV's for blacks ..." from Dave Slavin. "Accept black leadership" -- (usually porkchop leadership). Some RYM factions try to impose their student-radical attitudes toward women on the rest of the population -- their view of "women's liberation." Still other demand that wage-earners adopt the student-radical life style *in toto* by living in "communes."

But the negative part of the program is far more important: through their black masks RYM dms it into our ears that the greatest help by far that can be provided to "third world" struggles is fights with the police in the streets of American cities.

### PIG PROGRAM

The white-collar malcontent explains his own misery, and therefore everyone else's, as the result of relations of personal subordination and domination. His offspring and political voice in the RYM has a program of fighting all authority with anyone

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## THE TRUE HISTORY OF SDS CONVENTION

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discuss what should be done about the situation. At this point she resolutely marched out followed often not so resolutely by about a third of the conventioners.

The walkout was awkward and incompetent, but after all these were the people who destroyed the Columbia strike organization. Spontaneous it was not, as we have shown. Can Jack Smith be unaware of this? His newspaper has been calling for PL's expulsion, in articles by Carl Davidson and others, for about a year now.

The remainder of Friday and almost all of Saturday was spent by the WSA-SDS in workshops, while in the next room the RYM tried to decide why they were splitting the organization... primarily by delivering countless anti-PL polemics. Most of them favored a complete split rather than the formation of an internal caucus.

In the Guardian, both Smith and Randy Fuerst pretend that "SDSers" (i.e. RYMers) moved about 'among WSAers, attempting to buttonhole them,' and found 'no problem in persuading some out of their positions.' This garbage can be rapidly disposed of. The RYM groups, with their moronic 'white-skinned privilege' line are far too obviously anti-working class to be any threat to PL. However, PL did begin to get nervous about the role of the Labor Committees in WSA-SDS workshops. Trapped into constantly reiterating its non-exclusionary policy, PL-WSA could no longer tacitly conspire with the NO to prevent groups like the Labor Committees and ISC from putting forward their positions. After a day of debate with the Labor Committees, half the WSAers were sent home on Saturday night and early Sunday morning.

## ALBANIA CONTROVERSY

During a plenary session between the workshops on Saturday, PL reached a high point in its non-exclusionary fervor and magnanimity. Jeff Gordon was recognized and moved that the intolerable contradiction between a non-exclusionary policy and the existing split should be resolved by charging into the next room. Political unity seemed impossible, but geographical unity would not be difficult to achieve, just painful. The motion won little support from the assembled delegates, who seemed to be anti-struggle, and it was dropped.

In the next room, debate continued over the 'principles' on which PL would be expelled. It was suggested that every SDS member must support, among other things, the governments of North Korea and Albania, as well as the 'right' of black and Spanish-surnamed Americans to establish an undetermined number of new nation states and national governments within the boundaries of the present U.S. Suggestions to include mention of the 'working class' among these 'principles' were jeered, hooted, and voted down.

The door separating the two groups was closed by RYM before the vote on the resolution. No one was permitted to leave for any reason except the call of nature, and then only if accompanied by a security guard. When the vote was taken, the two theses, which in regrettable anti-historical style were never nailed to the door, were passed overwhelmingly.

Then, at about 11:00 p.m., only half an hour before the deadline by which the hall had to be vacated if it were to be used the next day, the great Short March began. PL had agreed to give the podium to the RYM for their parting polemic. It was a truly spiritual experience.

## SECOND WALKOUT

For once the "real SDS" began something in a disciplined manner. The door between the rooms was thrown open. A tight, squared off rank of woman karate experts emerged quickly and silently surrounding the speaker's platform. A hush of anticipation fell upon the crowd. The service had begun. A second phalanx appeared, surrounded the first, and stared expressionlessly over the heads of the audience. Then the entire RYM, led by a handful of Panthers, marched around the audience to surround it on every side, silent, 2-3 deep, arms folded. Still no speakers; the RYM looked like the road company for Triumph of the Will.

But the stars of the caste, the priests and priestesses were about to make their entrance. About 30 members of the leadership of the two RYM factions emerged, marched ceremoniously up the steps of the podium and stood silent, arms folded, in ranks presumably prearranged according to pecking order, similar to the official viewers of the Moscow May Day parades. For the benefit of budding Gremelinologists, Bernadine Dohrn stood behind the microphone, while Mark Ruff stood to her left, first in his row, John Jacobs to her right, first in his, and Mike Klonsky directly behind her.

Only when the platoons had all taken up their positions did the solemn ritual begin. First, Klonsky stepped forward to declare that there would be no fights and anyone starting one on either side was a provocateur. Then he stepped back to his place. At last the voice of the high priestess, Bernadine Dohrn, boomed out, intoning in what she called a "statement of principle" in the name of Marx, Lenin, Mao, and the unmentioned, but ever-present Holy Ghost, Joseph Stalin. The wind of history was blowing strong and hot. There were enough weathermen for everyone to know which way it was blowing.

It was an odd and ominous scene: 1500 people silent in a hall which only a minute before - and always during speeches - had been buzzing with talk. One faction stood in silence, while the other sat quietly as their enemies' seemingly disembodied voices began to read them out of their organization. Perhaps it was a flaw in the speaker system, or the unusual hush, but Bernadine's voice bore a curious resemblance to that of Big Brother.

Suddenly, as she was declaring that PL had been expelled, she was drowned out by the roar of giggling. She paused, but now PL was not to be outdone. If the RYM was expelling them, they were going to make it clear that they were expelling the RYM. As Bernadine droned ear-splittingly, PL's Jared Israel was transformed into a whirling Dervish, extorting his followers with mystical incantations. First boos resounded through Temple, then blasphemous cries of "Bullshit," drowning out the liturgy of the former interorganizational secretary, whose reign had been so effective that it would take two people to replace her.

The chants of the heretics became the high pitched screams of psychotic experience; they became Holy Rollers speaking in tongues; the Diet of Chicago was transformed into a holy scat singers convention.

Having finished her sermon on the mount, Bernadine and the rest of the RYM crowd began to file out of the hall. Mark Rudd started a chant: "Power to the People." The PL-WSA faction gave the response: "Power to the Workers." The RYM departed and God went with them.

## EPILOGUE

The next day, Sunday, the RYM appropriately continued its service in a church, while the heretics remained behind in the synagogue of Satan. Ecstatic, relieved of the burden of sin, the RYM refined its exclusionary policy, elected its officers, and decided upon further action. The RYM II faction of Klonsky and Avakian were defeated 60-40 as weathermen took the three national offices: Mark Rudd, national secretary; Bill Ayers, educational secretary; and Jeff Jones, interorganizational secretary. RYM II took only two of the NIC positions. The RYM also decided to have a bash with the Chicago police at the conspiracy trial.

Back at the Coliseum, the SDS (Bolshevik) passed some resolutions and elected officers: John Pennington of Boston PL as national secretary, Pat Forman of S.F. as interorganizational secretary, and Alan Spector from the New England region as educational secretary. The NIC was made up of one PL, five WSA, one critical of both PL-WSA and the NO, and one who had returned from the church across town to sell his soul in the unholy land of Israel, which promptly returned the favor by seeing him elected to a high position.

These historic events constituted the most extreme development of the dramatic form called "farce with implications," implications which bring into question the viability of the form itself. The Guardian's distortions will not serve to protect it from its fate.

## WHY SDS HAD TO SPLIT

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At any time, especially "pigs," i.e., personal authority-figures or father-figures ("mother-fuckers") such as teachers and policemen. "All of our concrete needs lead to pushing the pigs to the fore as a political focus." -- "Weatherman."

Most of the political baggage of the Dohrn-Rudd "Weatherman" faction -- the majority of the RYM and its most self-consistent tendency, is the plain result of a "concrete need" to clear away all ideas, groups and individuals which could hinder or limit its plans for street-fights with "pigs." PLP, for instance, has been a great embarrassment to such adventures as the 1969 Columbia sit-ins and other "blow-ups." It was no accident that the Dohrn group was far more eager than anyone else in RYM to sever all connections with PL immediately.

To judge the appropriateness of a particular pig-fight by what it can win is also to place restrictions on the sport of pig-fighting; hence "Weatherman" opposes both material (and even non-material) demands and working-class ties (the two are intimately connected since the constituency of a working-class movement is defined by its common material and related needs). "Weatherman" says as much in almost those words in a section on educational reforms:

"What does it mean to organize around racism and imperialism in specific struggles? In the high schools (and colleges) at this time, it means putting forth a mass line to close down the schools, rather than to reform them so that they can serve the people. The reason for this line is not that under capitalism the schools cannot serve the people, and therefore it is silly or illusory to demand that. Rather it is that kids are ready for the full scope of militant struggle, and already demonstrate a consciousness of imperialism, such that struggles for a people-serving school would not raise the level of their struggle to its highest possible point." (New Left Notes, 6/18/1969, p. 6).

It says so again on the women's page of the Guardian:

"Barbara Reilly and Howie Machtinger ("Weatherman") objected to "struggling for equality with men" and argued that no change in the status of women could occur until socialism was achieved. They objected to fighting for day-care centers or increases in welfare allowances, saying that fighting for democratic rights (?) -- even if these rights were seen to be

serving real needs of the people -- was not sufficient." (Guardian, 6/28/1969, p. 10). The RYM jeered, hooted and twice voted down suggestions to include mention of "the working-class" or "working-class organizing" in its "Statement of Principles."

The Dohrn group is not fascist, but many of its characteristic positions converge startlingly with those of the Hitler and Mussolini movements (both of which once considered themselves socialist), especially of their left wings. First, the three tendencies have several "new working class" theories in common, believing: 1) that the "main contradiction" is that between "oppressed and oppressor nations;" 2) that youth is an oppressed class, or almost a class; and 3) that white-collar workers are *ipso facto* members of the working class. Second, all three believe in the possibility of some sort of revolution made by a small minority of the population ("Blacks could do it alone if necessary, although the cost among blacks and whites would both be high.") One reason for these and other similarities is that all these movements have a strategy of "educational confrontations," "exemplary actions," or "purgative violence" (George Sorel was a leading theoretician of Italian fascism), i.e., fight-outs not designed to win concessions: pig-fights. They all had reason, therefore, to steer clear of any "traditional" or other working-class with irrepressible material demands; doubly so for Mussolini once his "socialist" movement began to be subsidized by Italian bankers. "Youth" meant a capacity for mindless militancy and mindless devotion, as well as freedom from practical worries. In sum, all three are movements of "youth street-gang organizers."

## FUTURE OF RYM

The minority tendency in RYM, the Avakian-Klonsky or RYM 2 group, is quite similar to Weatherman. It differs, however, in taking a straight Third Period (1928-34) CPUSA position on some issues. For instance it demands the right of secession for the "black belt" in the South. When Stalin charted out this "nation" in 1931 it was a continuous area of black majority; now, as Avakian admits, that is far from the case. He argues, however, that to recognize the disappearance of the "black belt" would be a concession to the bourgeoisie, which has been trying to abolish the black nation by demographic devility. . . . Independents, before joining a Third Period revival, should probably study where the Third

Period brought the Comintern, e.g. in Germany.

Some of his views may seem funny, and indeed it takes a funny kind of "Maoist" to vote down "working-class organizing" and sleep in the same bed with such a blatantly anti-working-class tendency as Dohrn's, but Avakian is no joke to the Weatherman. He and Klonsky do talk about the working-class: they want to conduct research to see which parts of it we can work with and how. They have detected a tendency towards "adventurism" in Dohrn and Rudd. These positions are powerful magnets for many chapters and independent caucuses which are too hung up on the working-class, or just too sensible, to join the Weatherman, but lack the self-confidence to stand on their own within or outside of RYM. Klonsky is sure to gain when the Weathermen lead their bloody bashes with the police in September or before. This will probably lead to the "expulsion" of one or the other faction -- assuming RYM lasts that long.

The only sure thing about RYM's future is that it can't last any length of time in its present form. It is a sitting duck simultaneously for government repression -- since it can only alienate working people --, for a new split, and for absorption into an umbrella front-organization of the moneyed "old left." There seems no way to guess which will happen first.

It's clear that the Weathermen are virtually standing in line to be co-opted into the left wing of a fascist movement should the wind blow in that direction. A related but more immediate danger is their use by the likes of Rockefeller and black cultural-nationalist agents in a Holy War against the ("racist") trade unions. To the liberal ruling class, union wage demands and strikes, especially in the public sector, are the biggest obstacles to a successful austerity or wage-price control program, while to many in the Dohrn faction the unions are defenders of racism or "white skin privilege." Speaking for himself in RYM's church, "Weatherman" theoretician Bill Ayers said that he would in general support scabbing if it was done by blacks.

## (ADV:) RYM --

Tired? Fed up with your job? Give up that gray matter privilege. Let yourself go. Many places still open for intellectual (preferably) house servants -- maids, butlers, chauffeurs, tutors, wet-nurses, laundresses and launderers. Past employers, positions no object. Says Dave G.: "Treated like one of the family!" . . . Carl D.: "Rarely whipped, and then quite gently. Soon got used to it." Opportunities for advancement! Openings at the top! So hurry! hurry -- Apply today!

## WHAT NEXT?

The WSA caucus, led by the PLP, shares many of the mental aberrations of the RYM groups, as seen in its campaigns for paleolithic education (opposition to struggles to maintain and expand university enrollments) and for the equalization of misery (known as preferential hiring). The latter demand is especially dangerous, because it calls on two sections of the working class to join each other in suicidal struggle over shares of an inadequate and relatively declining job market. It calls for war between unemployed blacks and insecure unions to the detriment of both. It is for this reason, and not because it was convinced by WSA

(Continued On Page 4)



### WHY SDS HAD TO SPLIT

(Continued From Page 3)

arguments, that the U.S. government has just instituted a policy of preferential hiring for its construction work. Far from fighting racism, as WSA pretends, "preferential hiring" will increase racism by increasing the economic insecurity of white workers and directing it against blacks.

But there is one great difference between WSA and "Weatherman." PL's trade union section and WSA's policy of trying to ally with trade-union and similar struggles are a constant check on the caucus' tendency to degenerate into a refurbished Salvation Army. In particular we can expect that the preferential hiring demand will be dropped before too long, as PL's policy of uncritically tailing black cultural nationalists on the campus was dropped, because it conflicts with trade union reality. Trade-union materialism, as expressed through the WSA, puts real limits on the unqualified right of small groups of students and "youth" to fight the pigs. It threatens "Weatherman's" International Liberation Army with instant destruction by the most cruel weapon of all - laughter. That is why the organization of Friday had to break up on Saturday.

Did the exit of RYM solve SDS' organizational-programmatic problem? A unitary focus for radicals can only be built in this period given an approach to existing movements which tends to weld them together into a unified force fighting for demands common to all. If WSA does not know how to do this, then SDS will only go on to more severe tensions and splits, reflected into it from the society it is trying to organize.

WSA's policy is simply to support all the fragmented defensive fights being mounted by different segments of the population, throwing in a dash of revolutionary rhetoric about state power, pig power, etc. WSA chooses to ignore the fact that the working class is in large part organizing against itself. One cannot simply wish away the bitter competition for an inadequate number of jobs, an inadequate number of housing units, insufficient funds for education and other public services. PL is really trying to take all sides of a dispute simultaneously, with results that are ultimately very sad, although sometimes amusing in the short run. For example, the principal demand of the WSA-led Columbia SDS Expansion Committee is that the University assign 200 student-occupied apartments to "working people" from the community. Assuming the 200 students are not going to sleep under parked cars, exactly how does this demand help alleviate anyone's housing problem in Morningside Heights?

Historically, PL is "recommending" trade-union and similar parochialist forms of struggle to workers just at the moment when these forms are losing all ability to deliver significant concessions. An organization which tries to deal with popular upsurge in this way is doomed to political schizophrenia. It will only turn itself into a mass of competing interest groups. The crisis in SDS was not solved by the departure of RYM nor can it be as long as present WSA politics continue to predominate. (On PL, see "Economism or Socialism" in December 1968 and June 1969 Campaigner.)

Neither fragment of the old SDS measures up to the political requirements of the present period, and neither has much of a future in its present form.

Neither can win working-class support. In fact, each sets itself up for fierce and popular government repression by making demands which imply the emiseration of white wage-earners to the level of their black brothers. Neither understands the economics nor the sociology of the processes which are ripping apart the social fabric of the capitalist world, and about the best that either organization can hope for, if it maintains its present level of ignorance, is to be blindly ripped apart itself.

Whether the present chaos on the left will ever be surmounted, whether the present social crisis will result in anything better than the continued fragmentation of society, depends largely on whether at least some elements of the movement can demonstrate the ability to hold themselves together for a necessary period of dialogue about the practical, positive socialist alternative to imperialist decay. Otherwise we are left with the choice between kindergarten-level socialism and juvenile delinquency.

The SDS Labor Committees have developed what we think is the basis for a sound socio-economic analysis of the present period and a practical socialist alternative to its horrors (see Campaigner and our other literature). So have others. To become adequate to the task, all these serious programs must be tested, compared and developed in a process of joint work and joint discussion. They must all confront each other in theory and practice -- we are proposing a joint newspaper as the first stage of this process.

Of course, a continuing newspaper will become a reality only if enough people want it to and actively indicate so by sending articles, letters, money, and suggestions. We need help in every capacity from editorial staff to distributors. Please let us hear from you before New Left "socialism" becomes a bad joke at the expense of the entire non-ruling class population.

Write Convention Report, c/o Dillon, 647 W. 184th Street, New York, N.Y. #10033.

### NEWSFLASH

(Continued From Page 1)

the scene, guns drawn, and dispersed the crowd, allowing only those already inside the building (almost exclusively RYM) to re-enter the auditorium. There were no arrests.

At a rump meeting in nearby Washington Square Park, Jeff Gordon, excluded PLP student leader, announced his faction's commitment to an open SDS, pledging continued struggle to open up future meetings called by the RYM group. Gordon was reluctant, however to call a regional meeting himself, and finally did so only in response to the urgings of rank and file WSA members.



All the king's horses  
and all the king's men . . .



"Looking Glass Insect" with head on fire.

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## LATE NOTES

1. Apologies for the poor layout job; initial lack of funds and haste were the cause.
2. Response to our ads has been very encouraging - over 300 requests to date. We are proceeding ahead with our idea for a new socialist national newspaper. But such a plan will only succeed if we hear from organizations and organizers throughout the country. (See DRAFT EDITORIA STATEMENT.)
3. We are also enclosing the Phila. SDS Labor Committee's newspaper, CRISIS, to illustrate what we mean by "socialist organizing" (see EDITORIAL STATEMENT). Debate about the correct program is what is at stake in dialogue among socialist organizers - we present an issue of CRISIS to show what we think is the kind of program that can speak to the needs of the entire non-ruling class population. Needless to say, although the issue describes a planned electoral campaign of the Labor Committee in Phila., we understand that the movement to win socialism far from rests with electoral activity. We invite people to send in issues of other working-class newspapers they are involved with.
4. Please write us for more copies of CONVENTION REPORT if you want them. They are available in large quantities and might be used in bookstores or meetingplaces of movement organizations.